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THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF THE FAST DEPLOY-  
MENT LOGISTICS SHIP (FDLS): A CASE STUDY  
OF FUTILITY

John L. Jones

Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

28 February 1972

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by

Commander John L. Jones,  
US Navy "

US Army War College  
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A Case Study of Futility

The inability of US strategic mobility resources to rapidly deploy large numbers of land forces and their equipment to overseas battle areas was repeated in World War I and II and the Korean conflict. Had the US possessed this capability, those wars would have probably been won sooner and cost far less in American lives and dollars. The lessons learned resulted in acquisition of the viable C-141 and C-5A airlift resources and, in the early 1960's, in the birth of the Fast Deployment Logistics Ship (FDLS) concept. Although the FDLS would have greatly enhanced US strategic sealift capability, it was defeated in Congress. Through a review and analysis of numerous reports of Congressional hearings, and articles published in military and trade journals, the events and pressures which led to the defeat of the FDLS are presented as a case study. Two distinct lessons should have been learned from the FDLS experience: military planners must insure that new military concepts have Congressional support before extensive resources are committed to such projects; and programs which require the adoption of unproved innovative management and procurement techniques should not be pursued too quickly. Since the death of the FDLS program in 1969, no new or equivalent program has been initiated. Faced with a serious short-fall in strategic assets, it would appear prudent for the US Army to attempt to revitalize, expand, and employ its previously proven Forward Floating Depot (FFD) concept in the interim, especially in Asia.

## PREFACE

This paper was produced in response to a request made by the Chief of Staff, US Army, which asked the student body, US Army War College, Class of 1972, to contribute material for possible use and inclusion in a major Army study project. The objective of the project is to identify the missions and tasks of the US Army in the 1970's. In consonance with that objective, this paper, through case study methodology, traces the efforts and failures of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to enhance US strategic sealift capability. Implications of the failure of these efforts to the US Army in the 1970's and to the Nation, particularly within interpretations of the Nixon Doctrine, are discussed and analyzed.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### BACKGROUND

Four major wars have been fought during the 20th Century which required the overseas deployment of large numbers of US Army personnel and military equipment. Once deployed, a high-volume and continuous logistic chain was required to support the units with food, ammunition, repair parts, replacement personnel and new equipment. These four wars; World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War, have all shared the following logistics/sealift scenario:

The primary means by which large numbers of US Army personnel and their equipment are deployed overseas, and their logistic support maintained, is through US sealift resources.

US military sealift resources are available primarily from the US government operated Military Sea Transport Service (MSTS)<sup>1</sup>; from foreign flag shipping which is under US control; from subsidized and non-subsidized US flag shipping; and from the National Defense Reserve Fleet. (The bulk coming from the latter two sources during times of military emergency.)

Active US sealift resources have been inadequate to sustain logistic support of US forces during the four major conflicts. Activation of reserve fleet ships has been necessary to augment active resources.

While US sealift resources have been able to respond adequately to military charter needs when sufficient strategic warning or build-up time existed, they have not been able to respond adequately to a no-warning, immediate need situation.

The inability of US sealift resources to respond quickly to emergency military needs has been recognized by military planners since World War I. Efforts to develop a more responsive capability did not begin seriously, however, until the mid-1950's. The issue was forced by a combination of the logistic/sealift lessons learned during World War II and the Korean conflict; and the recognition by military and civilian planners alike that strategic warning or build-up time available to the US in future wars would probably be far less than in previous wars. Hence, a series of experiments and studies were undertaken by the Army, the Navy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and the Department of Defense (DOD) to develop a rapid sealift/airlift capability in the US. These efforts reached culmination in the mid-1960's with the DOD-sponsored programs for acquisition of the C-5A cargo transport aircraft, and the Fast Deployment Logistics Ship (FDLS).

The concept for employment of the C-5A was acceptable to the US Congress, funding obtained, and procurement action taken. As a result, the C-5A aircraft is currently in the inventory of the US Air Force. The FDLS, however, did not fare as well. Although the FDLS concept was initially accepted by Congress and design funding obtained, the program found itself subjected to increasingly intensive criticism from industrial, maritime and Congressional sources in succeeding years. Finally, during hearings on FY 1969 military appropriations, procurement of the FDLS was formally disapproved by Congressional action.

### THE PROBLEM

Although the FDLS concept is currently a dead issue, no new or comparable program exists which will provide a rapid sealift capability for the deployment of US Army personnel and equipment. In the event of a major overseas conflict in which Army forces will be required to participate, their deployment will be constrained by a logistic/sealift scenario similar to that described earlier for the four major 20th Century conflicts in which the Army participated.

### INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

Most of the issues and historical data associated with this case study have been well documented in material available at the Army War College Library. No problems with security limitations were encountered. While the library was the primary source of research material, two trips were made to Washington, D. C. to conduct informal interviews with officers in the Navy Department who were knowledgeable with developments as they occurred in the FDLS program; and who are currently knowledgeable with on-going programs which could lead to the enhancement of US sealift capabilities through the modernization and expansion of maritime forces.

Two documents, Congressional committee hearing reports H.R. 9240, No. 8 (March-April 1967); and S. 3293 (February-March 1968), contained the bulk of primary research material necessary to



complete this case study. Other library materials which proved useful and from which items of research data were obtained include: Various issues of the magazines Army, Armed Forces Management, Marine Corps Gazette, Naval War College Review, US Naval Institute Proceedings, and Military Review; and research papers completed by former students of the Army War College.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE CASE STUDY

This paper is organized in six chapters to provide the reader with:

A broad overview of the rationale supporting development of the military requirement for a rapid sealift capability in the US.

A description of the FDLS as conceived and how it would be employed.

The genesis of the FDLS concept from initial Army experiments, service and DOD studies, and Presidential guidance; through the design, contractual and production innovations which helped to signal its defeat.

The arguments against the FDLS which were voiced by the shipbuilding industry, maritime and shipping interests, and finally by the Congress.

The causes of defeat of the FDLS program and the lessons learned, and finally, a discussion of the implications of the current sealift shortfalls to the Nation and the US Army.

## CHAPTER I

### FOOTNOTES

1. Renamed Military Sealift Command (MSC) in 1970.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FDLS CONCEPT

#### THE MILITARY REQUIREMENT

In supporting the FDLS concept, General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff, US Army, testified before the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives on 13 March 1967 that the United States had suffered seriously during past military operations from a lack of rapid deployment capability for land forces. He also referred to the then current JCS and DOD position that:

. . .the best strategy lies in a combination of measures involving some forward deployments together with a central reserve, all of which is mobile, and some of which is capable of very rapid deployment.

US strategic objectives which, General Johnson stated, would have been served by this new capability for early and rapid response by substantial military forces were two-fold: first, the deterrence of aggression; and second, the limitation of aggression in form, locale, and duration if it were not possible to deter it completely.<sup>1</sup>

Thus for the 1970's, US military planners envisioned the availability of a sorely needed new dimension to strategic mobility--a sealift capability to rapidly deploy combat-ready and fully-equipped Army forces. The rapid sealift provided by the FDLS would complete the strategic mobility conceptual loop which consisted of pre-positioned equipments overseas, well trained Army units in CONUS, and the rapid airlift provided by Air Force C-141 and C-5A aircraft.

High-speed FDL ships, preloaded with heavy Army equipment and necessary supporting supplies, and deployed in forward areas could, within hours or a few days, be positioned in a military trouble spot and quickly off-load all equipment to waiting Army personnel who had been flown to the scene from CONUS via rapid airlift.

This strategic mobility concept which General Johnson presented to the House Committee on Armed Services in 1967 reiterated the military requirement for procurement of the FDLs which DOD had established during 1965-66. General concurrence in the FDLs concept had been established among high level civilian and military executives and planners within the Department of Defense and the individual services. In addition, Presidential support was known to be strong for development of an improved rapid US sealift capability.<sup>2</sup>

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FDLs

Unique design concepts embodied in the FDL ship were specified by the Departments of the Army and Navy, and were stated to the Congress on 16 February 1963 by General Johnson as follows:

Large humidity controlled holds specially configured for the long term stowage of Army heavy equipment (up to three years).

A sustained speed of at least 24 knots.

A lift capacity of about 12,000 short tons of wheeled and tracked vehicles--the equivalent of approximately seven Victory-type ships.

An off-loading capability for both over-the-beach and dockside.

Facilities which permit the transfer of troops and material from the ship by either helicopter or embarked lighterage.

Facilities for the rolling-on or rolling-off of Army vehicles and flying-on or off of Army aircraft in a combat ready condition.<sup>3</sup>

Of the three companies which submitted designs for the FDLS in response to contract invitations, Litton Industries was selected after its proposals were evaluated the most attractive. Had the new rapid sealift program continued on according to plan, Litton would have built a fleet of 30 RDL ships with essentially the following characteristics and capabilities:

Over-all length 855 feet.

Beam-104 feet (within limits to permit transit of Panama Canal).

Draft-28 feet.

Displacement-40,400 tons.

Speed-25 knots.

Endurance-8,900 miles.

Propulsion system-60,000 s.h.p. geared steam turbine, twin screw.

Over the beach capability--complete "fly-on, fly-off, roll-on, roll-off" capability. All modes of cargo movement and handling could be conducted simultaneously without interference via helo pads, three sideports, a stern ramp, and rotating cranes. Helo and lighterage integral to the ship. (Note: this would not have represented an assault capability as compared to US Marine Corps capability utilizing amphibious shipping).

Unloading time--10 to 12 hours in a secure port area; 20 to 24 hours over the beach.

Environmental control--relative humidity could be lowered from 98 percent to 40 percent within seven days and maintain between 35 and 44 percent. Stowage of material in a controlled atmosphere for periods of up to three years.<sup>4</sup>

In the area of lift capabilities, 12 FDL ships could have moved the equipment of a full infantry division. (Thirty three of the largest commercial ships now being built would be required for such a lift. These 33 ships would be speed limited to 20 knots, have no dehumidifier environmental controls, nor an integral lighter/helo on-load/off-load capability). Four FDL ships could have moved the equipment of an infantry division with 15 days of supply and an initial load of fuels and lubricants. Eight FDL's could have lifted an armored division with 60 percent of its support units, 15 days of supply, and an initial load of fuels and lubricants.

The FDL ships were not designed as combatant vessels, therefore, they would have had a minimum of self defense capability against air, surface, or submarine attack. They would have been crewed by civilian MSTs personnel with a detachment of Army maintenance personnel embarked to carry out routine maintenance on the Army equipment loaded aboard. On-loading and off-loading operations would have been primarily an Army function with special augmenting details being embarked when such operations were to be conducted.

## OPERATIONAL MODES

In anticipation of varied rapid sealift requirements that could develop by changing strategic demands during the 20 to 30 year life span envisioned for the FDLS, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff, US Army, in April 1966, formally agreed upon FDLS operational concepts. The two Chiefs did not envision the total FDLS fleet of 30 ships being routinely deployed to distant areas, but saw them as employed in a combination of the following four operational modes:

Loaded and deployed in a forward area.

Loaded and ready to deploy from a CONUS port.

Partially loaded and in an overseas port.

Partially loaded and in a CONUS port.<sup>5</sup>

The first operational mode would have provided the shortest response time to react to an overseas crisis. FDL ships operating in this mode from the Subic Bay, P. I. area for example, could have been positioned off the South Korean coast within 2-3 days in response to an eruption of hostilities without warning between North and South Korea. FDLS's operating in the second mode could have arrived in the same area 8.2 days after departing a west coast CONUS port. An analysis conducted of reaction time and availability of the typical conventional merchant ship of the 1970's under this scenario indicates that such a ship would arrive off the coast of South Korea 43 days after it was assigned the mission. The ship would be a 20 knot cargo carrier with no over-the-bench capability and having a payload of approximately 2,500 short tons

when carrying Army division equipment. Charter acquisition of this type of ship, off-loading its current cargo, and reloading it with Army equipment would take an estimated 30 days of the total 43 required to become available in South Korean waters.<sup>6</sup> In the third operational mode, FDL ships would have been partially loaded with ammunition, fuel, and other supplies in an overseas port. While not as responsive as the first mode, the concept envisioned FDL ships being in or near overseas ports which were designated for out-loading of Army equipment within 24 hours. Thus, reaction time would have been faster than in the second mode with fully loaded FDLs in CONUS ports.<sup>7</sup>

In the fourth operational mode, FDLs would have been partially loaded as in mode three but in CONUS ports. The least responsive of the four modes, it would, however, have provided the greatest flexibility in area employment and mix of equipment for loading. The ships would have been kept in close proximity to outloading ports and commenced loading their Army equipment within 24 hours.<sup>8</sup>



## CHAPTER II

### FOOTNOTES

1. US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Hearings on Military Posture and A Bill (H.R. 9240), before the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, 90th Cong., 1st sess., 1967, pp. 578-580 (hereafter referred to as "House, H.R. 9240").

2. Graeme M. Taylor and Robert H. Rea, "Concept Formulation-A Case Study in Weapons System Acquisition," Perspectives in Defense Management (May 1967), p. 32.

3. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Authorization for Military Procurement, Research and Development, Fiscal Year 1969, and Reserve Strength, Hearings, before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, on S. 3293, 90th Cong., 2nd sess., 1968, p. 558 (hereafter referred to as "Senate, S. 3293").

4. Richard L. Madhouse, LCDR, "The FDL Surfaces Again," United States Naval Institute Proceedings (June 1968), p. 59.

5. Ibid., p. 56.

6. Edward L. Ramsey, Col, "Fast Deployment Logistics Ships," Military Review (January 1968), pp. 60-62.

7. Ibid., p. 61.

8. Ibid.

## CHAPTER. III

### GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE FDL CONCEPT

#### LESSONS OF HISTORY

When General Johnson testified before the House Armed Services Committee on 13 March 1967 in support of the FDL concept, his statement that the US had suffered seriously from a lack of capability to rapidly deploy land forces was accompanied by specific examples:

In the early phases of World War II, we were unable to respond to the Japanese, who quickly rolled over most of SE Asia and the Western Pacific. Thousands of casualties would no doubt have been avoided had we been able to occupy New Guinea, for instance, before the Japanese. I personally felt very keenly our inability to reinforce the Philippines early in the war!

Nine years later our initial deployment to Korea was made possible only by the presence of troops at a nearby base in Japan. The lift force was assembled from old LSTs in Japan, some Japanese and MSTS shipping, and the one Air Force Troop Carrier wing then stationed there. The movement of the first battalion task force to Korea on 1 July 1950 had to be accomplished with only six C-54s while the remainder of the 24th Infantry Division moved by water during the following eight days. It took almost two months (56 days) after the outbreak of hostilities to close the Second Infantry Division from the US to Korea. In contrast to this performance, once we have acquired and positioned FDL's and C-5A's, we are confident that we can close a division in Korea, plus supporting units whose total strengths exceeds that of the division itself, in less than two weeks.

In the summer of 1958, the crisis in Lebanon found our air and sealift forces inadequate

to mount quickly a show of force from the United States. Neither the Air Force nor the Navy had the necessary rapid lift capabilities, and on these the Army was absolutely dependent for strategic mobility.<sup>1</sup>

These observations made in 1967 by the Army Chief of Staff echoed similar warnings which had been made by many high ranking military officers during and after World War II. It was not until the late 1950's and early 1960's, however, that any significant action was begun to overcome this strategic deficit. During that time frame, the executive and legislative branches of the government and many military journalists and historians went on record supporting the acquisition of a viable US rapid sea and air lift capability.

#### FORWARD FLOATING DEPOT (FFD) CONCEPT

The idea of prepositioning Army equipment in ships was not an outgrowth of FDLIS studies. The Army considered the concept as early as 1953 while studying the sealift short-fall problems that had existed during the Korean conflict. It remained dormant, however, in an "idea" status until 1961. At that time, the Forward Floating Depot program was approved by the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Under this program, three World War II "Victory" ships were specially configured for the long-term stowage of heavy Army equipment under controlled humidity conditions. In January 1964, while fully loaded and at anchor in Subic Bay, P.I., the response of the three FFD's and serviceability of their

equipment was tested by the Army during a logistics exercise called "Quick Release." The highly successful results of the exercise proved the conceptual viability of atloat prepositioning of Army equipment.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the exercise pointed out specific advantages that could be gained if Army equipment was prepositioned in a ship such as the FDL which was designed for that purpose. A comparison of performance and capabilities between one FFD during exercise "Quick Release" and that of one FDL based on its design characteristics is as follows:

<u>Performance</u>	<u>FFD</u>	<u>FDL</u>
Speed	12-15 knots	25 knots
Load	2,400 short tons	10,000 short tons
On-load	6 days	48 hours
Off-load in port	48 hours	10 hours
Off-load over the beach	No capability	20 hours
Roll-on roll-off	No capability	Full capability
Fly-on fly-off	No capability	Full capability
On-board fueling and vehicle activation	No capability	Full capability <sup>3</sup>

#### PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S GUIDANCE

The US military airlift and sealift capabilities which existed in 1961 were inconsistent with the national policy programs of President John F. Kennedy. His evaluation of international treaty commitments and his expressed concern over the need for greater

US strategic mobility sparked the conceptual programs which followed.

The guidance he gave on 25 July 1961 left no doubt in the minds of strategic planners as to the tasks which confronted them:

We must have sea and airlift capable of moving our forces quickly and in large numbers to any part of the world. . . More importantly we need the capability of placing in any critical area at the appropriate time a force which, combined with those of our allies, is large enough to make clear our determination and ability to defend our rights at all costs--and to meet all levels of aggression pressure with whatever levels of force are required. We intend to have a wider choice than humiliation or all-out nuclear action.<sup>4</sup>

The President's message was clear. Ultimately, as a result of the impetus he gave to the sea and airlift programs, the C-5A was developed and procured, and the FDLs concept was born.

#### DOD, JCS AND SERVICE STUDIES

Immediately following President Kennedy's 25 July 1961 guidance, Secretary of Defense McNamara directed the JCS and all the military services to develop concepts and submit recommendations for the accomplishment of the President's sealift/airlift objectives. The airlift element was given immediate priority which resulted in the accelerated development and procurement of the Lockheed C-141 air transport. During the three years which followed, the FFD concept was tried and tested, and numerous studies were conducted within the major branches of the DOD which addressed the sealift/airlift problem. These studies produced a full-spectrum military analysis

of projected sealift/airlift force requirements including identification and definition of performance and capacity parameters of needed ships and aircraft; employment and deployment concepts for these ships and aircraft; and the logistic interfacing that was envisioned between the Army, Air Force, Navy, and maritime lift capabilities. Prepositioning of Army supplies and equipment both overseas and in CONUS was a key element of the projected sealift/airlift program.

Two major DOD programs resulted from the sealift/airlift studies. The first involved airlift and recommended to the President and the Congress that the planned C-141 force be ultimately reduced and that the C-5A Galaxy aircraft be developed and procured in its stead. This recommendation was quickly approved in 1965 and the President's airlift objective moved forward towards attainment.

The second major DOD program introduced the FDLS concept and the attainment of a rapid sealift capability. The wellspring of this DOD program and the FDLS concept can be traced to the US Navy sponsored study entitled, "Logistic Support of Land Forces (LOGLAND)," conducted in 1964. This study analyzed the feasibility of marrying strategic sealift and airlift forces to put Army equipment and troops anywhere in the world where needed within hours or a few days. The concept envisioned high-speed ships which were preloaded with heavy Army equipment, deploying to a military "hot spot" and quickly off-loading their equipment to waiting combat troops who had been flown to the area by strategic airlift forces. The acceptance by DOD of the sealift concept contained in the LOGLAND study signalled the birth of the FDLS.

## INITIAL DOD PROPOSALS AND CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

Following acceptance of the sealift concepts recommended in the LOGLAND study, a joint Army-Navy follow-on study was undertaken to refine operational concepts and to develop FDLS design characteristics based on projected ship performance requirements. In April 1966, after two years of intensive effort, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff, US Army formally agreed on FDLS design characteristics and operational concepts.<sup>5</sup>

In 1965, after preliminary FDLS design characteristics and operational concepts had been developed, but before completion of the joint Army-Navy follow-on study, the DOD proposed to the President that funds be made available for contractual design research and construction of two FDL ships. This proposal was approved by the President and endorsed by the Congress. Funds totaling \$67.6 million were authorized by Congress for construction of the two FDLS's in the FY 1966 Defense Appropriations Act.<sup>6</sup>

In August 1965, subsequent to Congressional approval and funding of the two-ship procurement program, SECDEF approved a new Navy-developed ship design and construction concept. The planned FDLS program was, in the SECDEF's judgement, particularly suitable for application of this concept. Therefore, he decided to delay expenditure of the authorized FDLS funds to permit the construction of the two ships concurrently with a larger FDLS procurement contract. In reviewing and supporting these developments, Secretary

of the Navy (SECNAV) Paul H. Nitze testified before the House Armed Services Committee on 13 March 1967 that:

The relatively simple FDL ships were selected as especially appropriate for the first application of certain of these procedures. Accordingly, it was decided to delay contracting for the two ships already approved and for which funds had been appropriated until they could be incorporated into a comprehensive plan for acquisition of all the requisite ships under a "total package" contract.

During this same testimony, Mr. Nitze reminded the Congress that at the time the decision had been made to delay contracting for the first two FDLS's, a formal DOD request had been made to the Congress for the use of \$10 million in research and development funds in order to carry out FDL "contract definition." The request was approved by Congress and the funds earmarked in the Defense Appropriation Act 1966 Supplemental.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the FDLS concept had been accepted and favorably endorsed by the Congress in their calendar year 1965 deliberations and decisions on the FY 1966 military budget.

#### THE TOTAL PACKAGE CONCEPT

The concepts embodied in the new approach to ship design and construction which the SECDEF approved in August 1965 were envisioned as having application to the procurement of all major military weapons system of the future. The FDLS program, representing the newest proposed major weapons system at the time, was, therefore, selected to serve as the prototype for the new procurement concept.<sup>9</sup>



Introduction of the new concept for the development and construction of this weapons system required the adoption by industry, as well as the military, of revolutionary new management techniques. For the military, these techniques involved the conduct and refinement, during all phases of the weapons system procurement cycle, of studies and analyses to insure that sound cost-effectiveness criteria were being met. For industry, these techniques centered around a new three-part weapons system planning and procurement procedure identified by the terms, "Concept Formulation", "Contract Definition", and "Total Package Procurement".<sup>10</sup>

Concept Formulation had its formal beginning in October 1965 after the SECDEF approved the total package contract procurement of the FDLS. At that time, SECNAV established an FDL Ship project in the Navy Department and appointed RADM Nathan Sonenshein as the FDLS Project Manager and Program Director. RADM Sonenshein assumed responsibility for the overall coordination of the three-part procurement program, and more specifically, for determining the best amongst FDLS operational, performance and design characteristics; and the most attractive production, operation and maintenance costs.<sup>11</sup>

During the Concept Formulation phase of the three-part FDLS procurement program, objectives were accomplished largely within the Navy Department with the assistance of the DOD and the Department of the Army. This phase reached its apex in April 1966 when the joint Army-Navy follow-on study on the FDLS was completed and all preliminary steps in the Concept Formulation phase had been accomplished. These included:

Army Navy and DOD concurrence with the FDLS concept.

Final definition of broad mission and performance parameters.

Determination that goals could be met through an engineering rather than an experimental approach.

Completion of selected trade-off analyses.

Compilation of evidence that the FDLS system would be cost-effective and that desired delivery schedules were feasible.<sup>12</sup>

Industry's first formal involvement in the new procurement program took place during the final stages of Concept Formulation in December 1965. At that time, an unclassified public briefing was held in Washington, D. C. which presented to more than 800 industry representatives a complete description of the total package contract and procurement concept. The briefing was followed by a public announcement inviting applications by January 1966 from those applicants who were interested in undertaking contract definition studies. Ultimately, a single contractor would be chosen to design, construct, and deliver the FDLS. Applications were received from twelve companies of which seven were found to be unqualified or later withdrew. Through a Request for Proposals (RFP) which was issued on 1 April 1966, the five remaining companies, all of which possessed established shipbuilding capabilities, were given further details on the FDLS and asked to submit their final proposals for participation in the program. Two companies, Todd and Bethlehem

Steel, ultimately withdrew and the three remaining firms, Litton, Lockheed, and General Dynamics were awarded definition contracts on 29 July 1966.<sup>13</sup>

With the awarding of the definition contracts in July 1966, Concept Formulation was completed, and Contract Definition, Part Two of the three-part FDLS procurement program began. The objectives of Contract Definition were to provide:

Efficient FDL ship design based upon the prescribed mission.

Guaranteeable performance specifications.

Identification of risk areas and their possible impact on system effectiveness.

Firm production schedules and costs.

Precise definition of contractor-government interfaces and responsibilities.<sup>14</sup>

The definition contracts awarded to Litton, Lockheed, and General Dynamics provided government funds to these companies to pay for the research and design efforts which would be required. The contracts were to terminate in six months (January 1967) at which time the three companies were required to submit their FDLS total package proposals. With the submission of all proposals on 31 January 1967, an extensive evaluation was commenced by RADM Sonenshein and his FDLS Project Office. To insure that a comprehensive evaluation was conducted, experts from various Army Commands, Naval Systems Commands, MSTC (now MSC), and the Maritime Administration participated in the review effort with RADM Sonenshein's staff. Upon completion of this review, part two of the three-part procurement program was to

terminate with the award of a single contract to the company whose FDLS design was evaluated the best in mission effectiveness and the lowest in anticipated system life cycle cost. This action would also signal the beginning of the Third and final step in the three-part procurement program--"Total package procurement". One contractor would then build all the programmed FDLS's to a specific design over a period of several years, and deliver them in accordance with specific schedules and at fixed prices.<sup>15</sup>

On 20 July 1967, the DOD publicly announced that the RFP submitted by Litton had been accepted as superior in all respects. Had the steps which were to follow gone according to plan, Litton would then have been awarded a contract to build 30 FDLS's. One step did not go according to plan, however--Congress refused to authorize funding in the FY 1968 military budget for the FDLS. A total package contract was never awarded to Litton or any other contractor.

## CHAPTER III

### FOOTNOTES

1. House, H.R. 9240, pp. 578-579.
2. Nathan Sonenshein, RADM, and Donn R. Pepke, EGEN, "FDL Ships: Vital Element in National Defense," Marine Corps Gazette (December 1967), p. 24 (hereafter referred to as "Sonenshein, FDL Ships").
3. Ramsey, p. 62.
4. Taylor and Rea, p. 32.
5. House, H.R. 9240, p. 586.
6. Ibid., pp. 586-587, 938-939.
7. Ibid., p. 587.
8. Ibid.
9. Department of the Navy Headquarters Naval Material Command, The Fast Deployment Logistic Ship Project (October 1966), p. 10 (hereafter referred to as "Material Command, Ship Project").
10. Ibid., p. 12.
11. Ibid., p. 11.
12. Ibid., p. 13.
13. House, H.R. 9240, p. 587.
14. Material Command, Ship Project, p. 14.
15. Ibid., p. 15.

## CHAPTER IV

### FORMAL DEFEAT OF THE FDLS

#### CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON THE FY 1968 MILITARY PROCUREMENT PROGRAM

During March and April 1967, while the three RFP's were being reviewed and evaluated, routine Congressional hearings were conducted on FY 1968 appropriations for the procurement of military hardware and weapons systems. Included in the DOD procurement requests for FY 1968 was the new FDLS project. It bore little resemblance to the FY 1966 FDLS project and represented the DOD support of conclusions and recommendations made in the extensive studies and conceptual studies that had been completed. In addition, Congress was formally introduced, at this time, to the DOD plans to procure major weapons systems through the new total package contract concept. During part of his extensive testimony on 13 March 1967 before the House Armed Services Committee, the SECNAV succinctly described the new procurement concept and DOD plans for the FDLS project in the following words:

These proposals [the three RFP's] were received on January 31, 1967, and a period of intensive evaluation is now underway which will ultimately lead to the selection of the final contractor.

Contingent upon Congressional approval, we will be ready to award a 3 year, multi-year, fixed-price, or fixed-price-incentive fee contract by June 1967. A request for five FDL's is included in the President's fiscal year 1968 budget. These five, together with the two

authorized in fiscal year 1966, would comprise the first ship increment of the multi-year plan. We intend to request 12 more FDL's in 1969, and 11 in fiscal year 1970 for a total of 30. . .<sup>1</sup>

During the two months of Congressional hearings on the FY 1968 FDLS project, bitter debate was generated by many factions who opposed it. Few top leaders in the executive and military branches of government were not summoned to testify about conceptual and managerial aspects of the project; and to respond to strenuous arguments against it which were posed by the shipbuilding industry, by labor, by shipping and maritime interests, and by many Senators and Congressmen. These debates were well publicized through the news media and industrial and military journals.

Upon completion of the hearings and their internal deliberations, the Congress dealt a lethal blow to the FDLS. First, the House Committee on Armed Services, in its May 2, 1967 report on the FY 1968 military procurement bill, recommended the approval of only two of the five FDLS's that DOD had requested (thus authorizing a total of four--the two previously authorized in FY 1966 plus two in FY 1968). Second, the House dashed all hope for a multi-year contract by going on record in their report that: "The committee . . . does not commit itself to approval of the 30-ship program."<sup>2</sup>

Following the House action, the Senate Armed Services Committee sealed the FDLS fate by recommending not only the entire deletion of the FY 1968 FDLS from the procurement bill, but also a rescinder of the FY 1966 authorization and appropriation for the two originally approved FDLS's. In view of the differences between the House and

Senate recommendations, the measure was referred to a joint conference committee. The Senate recommendations prevailed in the conference committee resulting in the elimination of all FDLS authorizations and appropriations.

Although the DOD knew of the Congressional setback in May 1967, it was decided nonetheless to complete the review of the RFP's which had been submitted by Litton, Lockheed, and General Dynamics. It can be concluded from this decision that the DOD did not consider the FDLS a dead issue at that time, but hoped that Congress would reconsider the project in it's FY 1969 military procurement hearings. Thus, the award of a contract to Litton for construction of the FDLS was anticipated and implicit in the July 1967 announcement of selection of that company's RFP.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS ON DOD ATTEMPTS TO  
PROCURE THE FDLS IN FY 1969 AND 1970

After the Congressional rebuff of the FDLS during the FY 1968 budget hearings, the project did not by any means enter a state of limbo. From May 1967 until the spring of 1968, the DOD and Navy Department busily regrouped and made preparations to sell the program to Congress when the FY 1969 budget would be submitted. During this period, numerous articles were published in military and trade journals both in support of and opposition to the project.

When the FY 1969 military budget was submitted to Congress in the spring of 1968, it included a request for \$183.6 million to



build four of a proposed class of 30 FDLS's. Overall lifetime cost of the program was expected to exceed \$2 billion. Procurement was to be through the same total package contract concept that DOD had proposed in the FY 1968 hearings. It was evident from the debates which followed in Congress that the opponents of the FDLS had also regrouped after the FY 1968 hearings, and had made extensive preparations to defeat the program. After many heated exchanges, the opponents emerged the victors. Congressional action on the FY 1969 request was the same as on the previous year's request. One curious difference existed, however: the House Armed Services Committee recommended cancellation of the FY 1969 FDLS request while the Senate Armed Services Committee voted to approve it. This was a complete reversal of the two committees' attitudes and recommendations of the previous year. Again, due to committee differences, the bill was referred to a joint conference committee. Here the results were the same as in FY 1968--the compromise bill showed deletion of the FDLS. Of particular significance to military planners was the following statement published in the conference committee report:

. . .The conferees after extended discussion agreed that while there were many reasons why this program should be supported, the lack of immediacy of the need for these vessels in the light of the current fiscal situation dictated that they should be eliminated from the program, without prejudice, this year.<sup>3</sup>

Following this second rebuff of the FDLS, the Navy demonstrated its belief that the program was finally dead, first, by closing its FDLS Project Manager's office on 30 June 1969; and then by submitting its FY 1970 budget proposals to DOD without an FDLS funding request. SECDEF refused to give up, however, and insisted that the Navy insert a scaled-down FDLS program in its FY 1970 "Shipbuilding and Conversion" request. In response to SECDEF's direction, the Navy included a request for \$186.7 million to build three FDLS's--the first increment of a 15-ship (vice 30) FDLS fleet. The request suffered the same fate as those submitted for FY 1968 and 1969. It was deleted from the Senate version of the Defense Procurement Bill, and never appeared in the version which was presented to the House. The House Armed Services Committee did, however, express concurrence with the deletion action taken by the Senate.

These Congressional actions on the FY 1970 military budget signalled the final defeat of the FDLS. It was not mentioned in FY 1971 or subsequent budget requests submitted by the DOD or the Navy.

## CHAPTER IV

### FOOTNOTES

1. House, H.R. 9240, p. 588.
2. US Congress, House, Committee of Armed Services, Authorizing Defense Procurement and Research and Development, Report No. 221 (May 2, 1967), pp. 8-9 (hereafter referred to as "House, Report No. 221").
3. US Congress, Conference Committees, 1968, Authorizing Appropriations for Military Procurement, Research and Development, Fiscal Year 1969, and Reserve Strength, Conference Report, House Report No. 1869 (September 5, 1968), p. 6.

## CHAPTER V

### CAUSES OF DEFEAT

In spite of the military requirement for a fleet of 30 FDLS's which was established by the JCS and strongly supported by the President, the DOD, and all the military services, the project failed to survive the Congress. The implications of that failure to the development and pursuit of future national and military strategies are indeed significant. In order to understand the full range of these implications, the factors and forces which caused the defeat must be reviewed and analyzed.

### OVERALL GOALS OF THE FDLS PROJECT

In addition to the primary objectives of obtaining a high-speed military sealift force, the DOD and Navy Department openly expressed confidence that four significant side-effects would result from approval of the planned FDLS project:

The US shipbuilding industry and merchant marine would be revitalized.

The average cost of ships would be reduced through the series production of large numbers of ships under the total package procurement concept.

Maintenance, logistics, manning, training, and a host of support problems inherent in multi-contract ship procurement procedures would be vastly reduced by standardizing a class of ship and its machinery components.

Industry would become intimately involved in the design and preparation of contract plans and specifications of ships--a responsibility always held by the Naval Ships System Command (previously the Bureau of Ships).<sup>1</sup>

The declining state of the US shipbuilding industry has been analyzed and documented in many sources. The House went on record recognizing this problem in their report on the FY 1968 military procurement decisions. It stated that:

. . . The Committee on Armed Services is fully aware of the necessity for improving our shipbuilding capability. The Committee is also fully aware of the deplorable condition of the American Merchant Marine. . . .

. . . The Committee. . . is also aware of the fact that our Navy shipyards are badly in need of extensive modernization. These shipyards are vital to our security and are indispensable, not only for battle repair, and overhaul, but also as a yardstick to determine fair pricing of ship construction costs in private yards.<sup>2</sup>

In their testimony before the House Committee on Armed Services, DOD and Navy officials pointed out the dramatic increases in productivity and decreases in costs which had been attained by Japanese and Swedish shipyards through extensive modernization and the adoption of modern production techniques. Proponents of the EDLS expected that the winner of the multi-year contract would find it economically advantageous to invest in the construction of an entirely new and modern shipyard which employed the more productive techniques. If not feasible to build an entirely new shipyard, it was felt that extensive modernization of an existing one would also prove profitable. Once built or modernized, these yards could build cheaper and more

competitive ships for the US merchant fleet as well as for the military. The validity of the DOD and Navy prediction of this FDLS side-effect was borne out when RFP's were submitted by the final three competitors. Two planned to build entirely new yards if awarded the contract, and the third to extensively modernize an existing facility.<sup>3</sup>

The second side-effect anticipated, that of lower average cost of ships, was estimated by RADM Sonenshein to represent savings of up to 30% in the FDLS project.<sup>4</sup> The Admiral's estimate was backed by extensive analyses which compared total overall costs of total package versus conventional procurement of small annual lots of two ships.

In discussing the cost reductions which could be realized from standardization, RADM Sonenshein pointed out that the Navy's fragmented demands for ships had led to costly shipbuilding practices and a proliferation of logistic support problems. Between 1951 and 1963, 109 new missile and ASW ships had been delivered to the Navy. Those ships were of seven different types and had been constructed by nine different companies and three public shipyards under 53 different contracts. No shipyard had built more than four ships under a single contract.<sup>5</sup> Procurement and distribution of repair parts for these ships continues to be extremely costly in money and time. In addition, the problems of training maintenance personnel and of carrying out effective maintenance practices were increased by proliferation of different types of auxiliary and component

equipments within similar type ships. Under the FDLS program, the Admiral estimated that a minimum of 95% and close to 100% intra-class standardization would be achieved as compared with 29% in the then new (1967) DDG-2 class of guided missile destroyer.<sup>6</sup>

By involving industry to a much greater degree in ship design efforts, the Navy felt that a broad range of new disciplines would evolve within industry. With a greater expertise provided by these disciplines, a fully integrated military/industrial team would result which could jointly address the analytical, design, management, engineering and production aspects of any proposed weapons system.<sup>7</sup>

These four expected side-effects which were part and parcel of the FDLS program produced counter side-effects which contributed directly to the defeat of the project.

#### OPPOSITION BY THE SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

While some of the strongest opposition to the FDLS project centered on its probable adverse impact on the American Shipbuilding Industry, Congressmen and others not directly involved in the industry were the loudest in voicing this opposition. Since approximately 80% of American shipbuilders' business is directly or indirectly sponsored by the DOD, it follows that the industry would be reluctant to speak out vociferously in opposition to the FDLS project. Those that did speak out, however, made their arguments pointed and clear.

One of the strongest objections raised was that the Contract Definition procedure offered distinct advantages to the aerospace

industry since they were experienced in and geared to prefabrication procedures, modular construction concepts, and assembly line production methods. The two major shipbuilding companies, Todd and Bethlehem Steel, used this as their argument for dropping out of the bidding during the FDLS contract Definition phase.

Another opposition view was voiced by a spokesman for the small shipbuilders, Senator Ellender (D., La.). He viewed the total package concept of ship procurement and the opportunity for the large multi-ship contractor to modernize his shipyard as a direct blow at the smaller shipyards.

In general, the established shipbuilders opposed the FDLS project because of unacceptable high cost and risks. They appeared particularly apprehensive over a project which was vulnerable to early termination by Congress.

DOD and Navy testimony in Congress attempted to reverse the opposition voiced by the shipbuilders but was unsuccessful. Magazine and trade journal articles written in support of the project were equally ineffective. The opposition from industry remained strong during the 1967-1969 Congressional hearings and acquired active supporters in labor groups in the Congress, and even within the Navy Department.



## OPPOSITION BY MARITIME GROUPS

The major objection to the FDLS which was argued by American maritime groups was that the ships would be used for peacetime point-to-point shipment of military cargo in direct competition with the Merchant Marine. This view was shared by many in the shipbuilding industry, in the shipping companies, in the labor unions, and in the Congress.

The expression of this view through an extremely strong Congressional lobby became so intense that SECDEF, in testimony before the House Committee on Armed Services, stated that:

. . . I am perfectly prepared to have this written into the law if the committee chooses, that we will not use those ships in point-to-point service in peacetime.<sup>8</sup>

The opposition was not swayed by the SECDEF's assurances. It argued, for example, that the administration of which the SECDEF was currently a member, could not bind any future administration regarding the employment of FDLS's any more than one Congress could commit succeeding Congresses to support a given policy.

Another argument left the DOD utterly without counter-argument. After the three EFD's which had been anchored in Subic Bay were unloaded in Southeast Asia in 1964, they were immediately put into point-to-point service as cargo vessels.

The attitudes of the Maritime groups was succinctly expressed by Ralph E. Casey, President of the American Merchant Marine Institute and former employee of the General Accounting Office (GAO) when he testified in 1967 before the House Committee on Armed Services. In

rebuffing the SECDEF's assurances that FDLS's would not be used on point-to-point missions, he stated that:

. . . I can well envisage some future period of temporary or permanent peace when the incumbent Comptroller General, noting the billions expended to construct and operate these prepositioned floating warehouses, will submit to the Congress a report pointing up the anomalous situation created by the chartering and use of commercial vessels for military cargo when these vastly expensive supply ships continue floating aimlessly about.<sup>9</sup>

Other arguments voiced by the Maritime groups included concern that funds spent on the FDLS project would result in a reduction of subsidies for merchant ship construction; that funds should be spent on building a large new merchant marine instead of the FDLS since merchant ships can support strategic sealift requirements; and that the FDLS project was a power grab intended to drive both unions and private industry out of military shipping.

In spite of extensive counter-arguments and assurances given in testimony before both Armed Services Committees of Congress by the SECDEF, SECNAV, CNO, and other proponents of the FDLS, the views held by the Maritime groups persisted and strongly influenced the Congress. The strength of that influence was manifested in House Report No. 522 on the FY 1970 budget when the House Armed Service Committee went on record stating that one of its reasons for opposing the FDLS was, ". . . The committee has not been convinced that these ships will not be used in competition with our private merchant marine. It is essential that the merchant marine be rejuvenated and not further eroded by Department of Defense actions."<sup>10</sup>

## OPPOSITION WITHIN THE NAVY

While there is no indication that anyone in the Navy Department disagreed with the strategic concepts embodied in the FDLS project, there was strong internal opposition to two elements of the total package procurement process. The first and most serious objection was voiced within the Bureau of Ships (BUSHIPS) over Concept Formulation and Contract Definition. The implementation of these processes would shift primary responsibility for ship design from BUSHIPS to civilian contractors--a prospect which had no appeal to the corps of military and civilian naval architects and marine engineers who staffed the Bureau. This issue became so strong and emotion-filled that in October 1965, the incumbent Chief of the Bureau of Ships and his deputy resigned their positions and retired from the Navy. Both officers acknowledged publicly that their decision to resign was influenced by the shift in ship design responsibility from the Navy to civilian contractors.<sup>11</sup>

The second objection to the FDLS voiced within the Navy Department concerned funding of the project. The construction of new warships and the conversion of existing ones was then and continues today to be accomplished through funds approved in the Navy's "Shipbuilding and Conversion, NAVY (SCN)" budget. The argument against FDLS funding was that the project was included within the SCN budget and would, therefore, compete for high priority ship construction dollars. Proponents of this argument pointed out that the FDLS represented a support element for an Army require-

ment, and that it had been budgeted and requested by the Navy only because sealift was an overall Navy responsibility. The problem was one of priorities. Navy budgeteers found it incongruous to categorize the FDLS project with new construction programs for aircraft carriers, submarines, and guided-missile ships. Therefore, the Navy's position was that funding of the FDLS project should be separate and distinct from the Navy's SCN budget.

#### OPPOSITION WITHIN CONGRESS

The groups opposing the FDLS project found many supporters in Congress. The shipbuilders, shipowners, merchant marine, and labor unions were particularly effective in recruiting influential members of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees to support their arguments against it. In addition to this lobby-generated Congressional opposition, other opposing arguments were generated directly within the Congress. The open expression of opposition by the Congress first began in March 1967 during the FY 1968 military procurement hearings, and increased in intensity and scope until the project was formally disapproved in 1969.

The strongest and most effective political argument against the FDLS was expressed by those Congressmen who saw it as a system which would expand Presidential powers. Proponents of this view saw the FDLS as a vehicle which would make it easier for the President to involve the United States in foreign military ventures without legislative consent. One of the most determined advocates

of preserving the ability of Congress to exercise its constitutional authority over US foreign involvement was Senator Richard Russell (D., GA.). As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, his 20 March 1967 committee report on the FY 1968 military budget clearly revealed his position and influence on the FDLS concept. In addition to expressing concern over the high cost (over \$1 billion) of the project, and the need to provide antisubmarine and antiaircraft escort protection for FDLS's, the report stated:

. . . Beyond the cost, the committee is concerned about the creation of an impression that the United States has assumed the function of policing the world and that it can be thought to be at least considering intervention in any kind of strife or commotion occurring in any nations of the world. Moreover, if our involvement in foreign conflicts can be made quicker and easier, there is the temptation to intervene in many situations.<sup>12</sup>

It was in this report that the Senate not only disapproved the FY 1969 FDLS funding request, but recommended diversion of approved FY 1966 funds to other Navy ship construction programs.

Cost of the FDLS project was another major criticism voiced by both Houses of Congress. To a legislative group who was becoming increasingly sensitive to military expenditures necessitated by the war in Vietnam, a new unproved program that would cost over \$1 billion was certain to raise congressional concern. In 1968, critics were quick to point out that FDLS contract definition had already cost over \$17 million and not a single keel had been laid down. A careful cost analysis was conducted by the Congress which impacted heavily on the multi-year feature of the FDLS project. Congress

was accustomed to addressing single-year procurement programs and was, therefore, reluctant to authorize an initial installment of FDLS's for fear they would become obligated to continue the program in later years. Senator Mansfield (D., MONT.) described the initial FDLS increment as typical of those "foot-in-the-door things which require careful scrutiny."<sup>13</sup>

Some cost-conscious shipping and maritime groups charged that the FDLS would compete with private merchant shipping for available federal funds. Others were convinced that if the money requested for the FDLS project was invested in the merchant marine, a large fleet of fast modern ships could be produced which could perform the FDLS mission. Specific proposals were made by the shipping industry which would have assigned merchant ships to the FDLS role. Among those were the "Lighter-Aboard Ship (LASH)", and The "Sea Barge". DOD pointed out fatal flaws in these proposals but not effectively enough to save the FDLS.

Finally, an analysis of the acrimonious dialogue expressed during many of the Congressional hearings and contained in numerous public articles written by opponents of the FDLS, indicate that at least to some extent, the project suffered setbacks from personal antagonism directed against Secretary McNamara and his entourage of "Whiz Kid" analysts. Many people, in and out of government, disliked the innovative DOD management techniques or simply resented Mr. McNamara's authoritarian manner and the ways that he changed the customary way of doing things. Since Mr. McNamara was clearly

was accustomed to addressing single-year procurement programs and was, therefore, reluctant to authorize an initial installment of FDLS's for fear they would become obligated to continue the program in later years. Senator Mansfield (D., MONT.) described the initial FDLS increment as typical of those "foot-in-the-door things which require careful scrutiny."<sup>13</sup>

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identified with the FDLS project, those who opposed him were relentless and often bitter in personal criticism of him and the FDLS. A vivid example of the disparaging manner in which the SECDEF was linked with the FDLS was the reference by Mr. Joseph Curran, President of the National Maritime Union and Chairman of the AFL-CIO Maritime Committee, to FDLS's as 'McNamara's floating Edsels.'<sup>14</sup>

#### SUMMARY OF PRESSURES WHICH DEFEATED THE FDLS

There is no one factor which can be identified as singularly responsible for the defeat of the FDLS. The numerous arguments in opposition to it and the ability of opposition groups to organize on common ground combined to create what Senator Russell described as "an exercise in futility."

A summary of major factors and pressures which contributed to the defeat of the FDLS is as follows:

Many members of Congress felt that the prepositioning of military equipment in FDLS's would inhibit Congressional ability to exercise its constitutional authority over US military involvements. With the FDLS, a President acting in his capacity as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, would have the ability to involve the US in another Vietnam-type conflict without the knowledge or consent of the Congress.

Many Congressional, shipping, and labor groups saw the FDLS as a direct peacetime competitor with the merchant marine for cargo and funds.

Congress was repulsed by the submission of an enormously expensive and unproved program at a time when it was attempting to reduce costs, bolster the economy, and support a burgeoning military and dollar commitment in Vietnam. In a sense, the FDLS fell victim to a struggle of fiscal priorities.



Many established and respected shipbuilding companies refused to accept the viability of the management and procurement innovations which were associated with the FDLS; or to give credence to the revitalization the project would allegedly give to the industry and to the merchant marine.

Many groups representing a cross section of government, industry, and labor believed that merchant ships could carry out the FDLS mission, and, therefore, that a large new US merchant fleet should be funded and constructed instead of the FDLS.

Strong traditionalist groups in and out of the Navy felt that ship design and procurement functions should remain in the Navy Department and not become responsibilities of industry. These same groups also believed that other vital Navy SCN programs would be cut back or possibly deleted because of the large slice of SCN funding which would have to be obligated to the FDLS.

An influential group of individuals were opposed to Secretary McNamara's policies and methods and would have actively opposed almost any program he authored. In short, the FDLS became a McNamara whipping boy.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

While a multitude of lessons learned can be gleaned from a case study analysis of the FDLS, two stand out to this writer as primary and all encompassing:

Planners who develop a new weapons system to support a military strategy must first be assured that the military strategy is fully understood and supported by Congress. In particular, failure to recognize a strategy which could threaten the role that Congress plays in foreign affairs will result in disaster for the planner.

Effective planners and administrators are not expected to oppose changes in management, procurement, and production techniques that will result in a better product at a cheaper price. However, an ultra-ambitious program which is replete with innovations, requires rapid implementation, and impacts adversely as well as favorably on its interested parties, must be carefully analyzed to determine how best to pursue it. The Total Package Procurement Concept failed in the case of the FDLS, but through slower and less conspicuous efforts, it has since been implemented in the procurement of three new classes of Navy ships.

## CHAPTER V

### FOOTNOTES

1. Sonenshein, FDL Ships, p. 27.
2. House, Report No. 221, pp. 8-9.
3. Sonenshein, FDL Ships, p. 27.
4. Ibid., p. 29.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
7. Ibid., p. 30.
8. House, H.R. 9240, p. 1104.
9. Ibid.
10. US Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Authorizing Appropriations for Military Procurement, Research and Development, Fiscal Year 1970, and Reserve Strength, and for Other Purposes, Report No. 91-522 (September 26, 1969), p. 54.
11. "Admiral Explains Why He Resigned," The New York Times (29 October 1965), p. 32.
12. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Authorizing Appropriations During Fiscal Year 1968 for Procurement of Aircraft, Missiles, Naval Vessels, and Tracked Vehicles, and Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation for the Armed Forces, Report No. 76 (March 20, 1967), pp. 5-6.
13. "\$5-Billion Slash in Defense Urged," The New York Times (21 April 1969), p. 9.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FUTURE OF STRATEGIC SEALIFT

#### CURRENT SEALIFT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Since the defeat of the FDLS, one new follow-on program has been sponsored by the DOD for procurement of strategic sealift resources. This program is still active, but it's proponents are not overly optimistic about it's probability of success. Many of the arguments which were voiced against the FDLS are being heard again. Under this program, 10 ships of a new type called "Multi-Purpose Ships (MPS)" would be built with private funds. Once built they would be operated by the MSC and used exclusively for military cargo under a long-term guarantee charter with the owners. The ships would be much smaller than the FDLS but possess many of the design features desirable for the handling of strategic military cargos. These include substantial bulk cargo stowage, roll-on roll-off capability, a stern ramp and four sideports, container stowage space, and a stern helo platform.<sup>1</sup>

With an expected cost exceeding \$300 million for the 10 MPS's, an opposition group has surfaced which echoes the familiar "competition with the merchant marine" argument:

With so much money invested in their ships the admirals won't be able to let them just sit around waiting for a contingency to arise or sail them around on training exercises. They'll have to use them.<sup>2</sup>

The level and intensity of the opposition to this program was vividly exemplified in July 1971 when Mr. Andrew E. Gibson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Maritime Affairs testified before the House Merchant Marine Committee. When asked what impact the MPS and its operational concept would have on a commercial fleet that is depending on military freight for 30 to 40 percent of its cargo, Mr. Gibson replied, "I think it'd be disastrous."<sup>3</sup>

The opposition notwithstanding, DOD and the Army and Navy are actively searching for ways to salve the arguments and push the MPS forward to acquisition. Congress has, however, failed as yet to enact the guarantee charter legislation necessary to start the program moving.

In addition to this effort to strengthen the MSC through acquisition of the MPS, active efforts have been underway since 1970 to revitalize the US Merchant Marine. In October 1970, Congress supported President Nixon's major new program which is designed to provide up to 300 modern new merchant ships over a 10 year period. While this program is moving forward, it is doing so very slowly. A large segment of the new ships will probably be of the container type or the barge carrying "Lighter Aboard Ship (LASH)" type. These ships will offer better capabilities for handling military cargos than conventional type merchant ships, but they will not possess the overall load capacity or flexibility of loading which is considered necessary in a viable strategic sealift fleet.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE NIXON DOCTRINE

The Nixon Doctrine, as announced in July 1969 by the President, and later clarified in his November 1969 address to the Nation states that:

The US will honor its treaty commitments.

The US will provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation whose survival is considered vital to US security.

The US shall look to the friendly nation who becomes threatened with conventional force to assume the primary responsibility of providing manpower for its defense.

Also explicit in the Doctrine is the "1 1/2 war" strategy under which the US will maintain in peacetime the general purpose forces necessary for simultaneously meeting a major Communist attack in either Europe or Asia, and assisting allies against non-Chinese threats in Asia; and contending with a contingency elsewhere. In defining the conditions under which US general purpose forces would be so used, the President stated that:

. . . a direct combat role for US general purpose forces arises primarily when insurgency has shaded into external aggression or when there is an overt conventional attack. In such cases, we shall weigh our interests and our commitments, and we shall consider the efforts of our allies, in determining our response.

In short, the Nixon Doctrine signifies a lower profile and less involvement by US military forces abroad and a concomitant reduction in expenditures of manpower and money for defense purposes. These

aspects of the Doctrine have positive appeal to a public and a Congress who are disenchanted with the political motives and the costs incurred in American lives and dollars of the Vietnam war.

For some military planners, however, the Doctrine cannot be viewed without a degree of apprehension on one point--the possible commitment of major US forces, under the Doctrine, to participate in a conventional war overseas, particularly in Asia. These planners will have recognized the one basic assumption inherent in the Doctrine which will be the key to it's success or failure: that a strategic warning period will exist prior to the commencement of hostilities abroad in which US forces will be committed.

The validity of this assumption is particularly significant to Army and Marine Corps planners, and has a direct bearing on strategic mobility, or more specifically, to strategic prepositioning and sealift.

With respect to Asia, military logic indicates that:

If the assumption is valid, our present and planned sealift resources, although short in numbers, capability, and flexibility, could probably be mustered to deploy our land forces, their equipment, and a logistics chain, timely enough to offer those land forces some probability of success in a military operation.

If the assumption is not valid, then present and planned sealift resources cannot deploy our land forces, their equipment, and a logistics chain in sufficient time to offer those land forces any probability of success in a military operation; except through extended and costly confrontation with an enemy who has initial control of the battlefield.

With respect to Europe, military logic indicates that whether the stated assumption is valid or not, our presently deployed forces, prepositioned stocks, military assistance anticipated from NATO partners, and available sealift resources, would be adequate to offer our land forces some probability of success in a military operation of short duration; and doubtful probability of success if of long duration.

It is likely that the strategic military planner will find himself truly in a dilemma. His belief in the Nixon Doctrine, its strategy, and in the validity of the assumption on strategic warning would be reinforced by such statements as, ". . . as far as Asia is concerned, it is not likely that we will deploy major ground forces on the mainland of Asia again soon," which was made by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, U. Alexis Johnson, to the student body of the US Army War College, Class of 1970. At the same time, however, our apprehensive planner might feel less confident by recurring thoughts of the unpredictability of the enemy; and by reading articles such as the following which was written by the well-known military analyst, George Fielding Eliot:

. . . the long term effect of the strategy of protraction on American domestic opinion has certainly commended itself to Communist leaders as worth another try.

For the next round, which shall presently confront us somewhere in this troubled and vulnerable world, we shall have to rely at the outset on military rather than political



sophistication. Get there fast has been our tactical name of the game in Vietnam. Get there faster will be the strategical name of the game the next time the whistle blows. Or else. The basic aim of the strategy of protracted war being to gain time, we shall have to make early use of air superiority, strategic mobility and superior armament to gain military and psychological advantage.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE FUTURE?

An inventory conducted in 1972 of US strategic sealift resources quickly reveals that no capability exists for a truly rapid overseas deployment of major combatant equipment. In addition, the current assets of our major sources of sealift--MSC, the merchant marine, and the National Defense Reserve Fleet--are generally superannuated and diminishing in numbers each year as worn out ships are retired to the scrap heap. A re-vitalized merchant marine program is in being, but the numbers and types of ships planned will not produce a viable national rapid sealift capability.

The present mood of Congress towards acquisition of a rapid sealift capability coupled with pressures to direct federal funds away from military and towards domestic programs, indicate that US strategic mobility will remain at it's present level of capability, at least for the foreseeable future.

Under these constraints, it appears to this writer that the US Army should exert maximum influence and pressure to revitalize, expand, and employ the FFD concept, particularly in Asia. Once in

being, it would appear prudent to retain that capability until such time as a viable rapid sealift force has been acquired, or until it has been confirmed that no apprehensions or doubts exist regarding the validity of the assumption that the US will enjoy adequate strategic warning prior to the commencement of overseas hostilities in which US forces will be committed.

*John L. Jones*  
JOHN L. JONES  
CDR USN

## CHAPTER VI

### FOOTNOTES

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